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ON PAGE **B-1**

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Don't Let It Spook You

CIA's Langley-McLean Connection Is Murky

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Leave it to the CIA to have a home town with an alias.

In movies and books, spy and counterspy contact headquarters at Langley. CIA directors and newspaper articles refer to meetings and secret decisions made at Langley. So where is the CIA's home?

"Technically, we are in McLean," said a CIA spokeswoman. "... Once upon a time, they called it Langley."

When protesters demonstrating against U.S. policy in Nicaragua and South Africa went looking for CIA headquarters up the George Washington Memorial Parkway late last month, they had no trouble finding it.

But where they were once they got there is a matter of dispute.

"As far as we're concerned, it's in McLean," said Conrad Clark, president of the McLean Citizens Association.

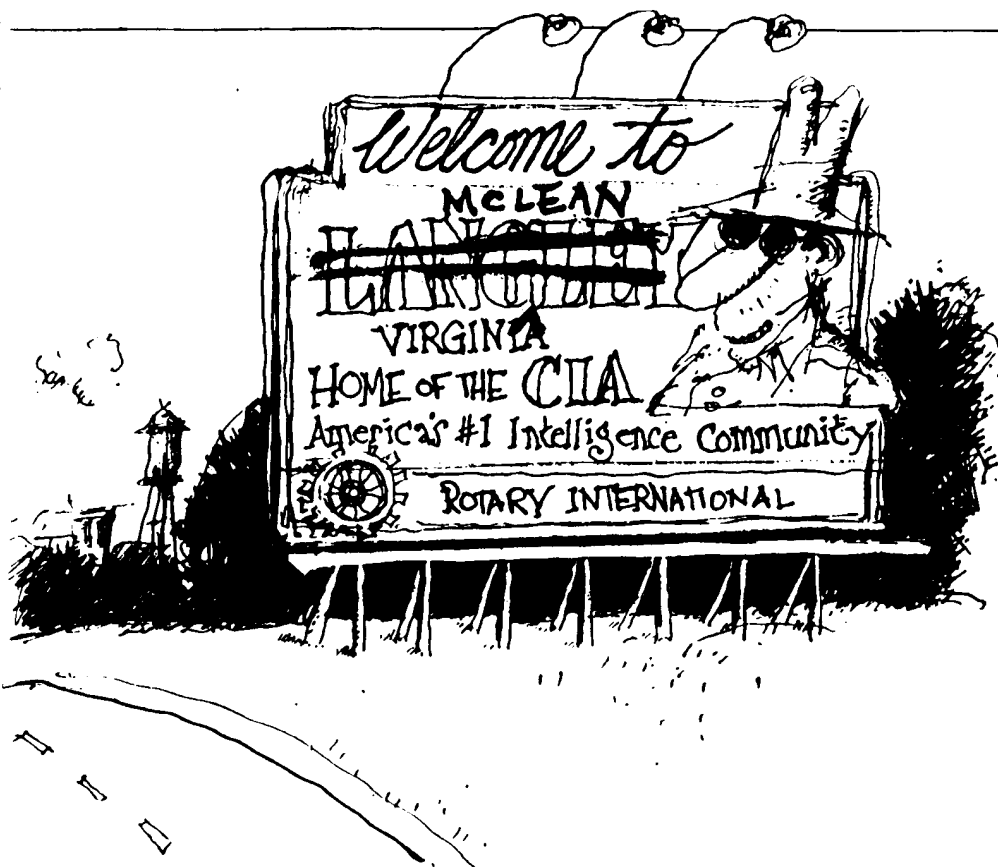
"It's Langley," declared Lee Feldman, spokesman for the National Capital Planning Commission, which reviews projects in the parkway area and approved the site of the headquarters in 1956.

The phone book lists the CIA in McLean. And by the way, the phone number listed in your directory has been changed.

When CIA Director Allen W. Dulles outlined plans for the headquarters in a 1956 statement, he referred to the "Langley site," which he said was chosen as "the one location ... most adequate for safeguarding the security of the CIA's operations."

As a symbol of new openness, the CIA ended in 1973 more than a decade of trying to fool motorists on the parkway with exit signs that read "Bureau of Public Roads," "Federal Highway Administration" or "Fairbanks Highway Research Station." Up went signs boldly announcing the presence of the secret agency.

Historically, Langley came long before McLean, according to Brian Conley of the Fairfax County Public Library's Virginia desk. It was an estate owned by the state's famous Lee family and named for its ances-



BY RICHARD THOMPSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

tral home in Shropshire, England.

McLean originally was a railroad station erected in the first decade of this century and named for John R. McLean, then owner and publisher of The Washington Post. McLean was one of those responsible for building the rail line, according to two histories of Fairfax County.

Both places are a bit difficult to define. There is a Langley High School and a McLean High School, both part of the Fairfax County school system, and various local businesses use the names. But neither area is incorporated, nor do they have their own governing bodies.

"Langley is more a geographical designation. It's not really a town—but then neither is McLean," mused Conley.

McLean association president Clark, agreeing that there are no clear boundaries to McLean, said it

is primarily defined by ZIP codes 22101 and 22102. And Langley? "I'm not so sure I know."

While neither place has official boundaries, the name Langley is closer to the CIA on county maps, noted Harvey Mitchell, an official in the Fairfax County zoning division. "They are both just areas that have been named that for a long time," Mitchell said. The site of the CIA headquarters appears on county maps as being zoned residential, but that allows for use for public purposes, Mitchell added.

So what does the CIA do for a mailing address? It uses a cover, of course: "Washington D.C. 20505."

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